

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NSCE-00 SAJ-01 NIC-01 SAM-01 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6754

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

UNCLAS KUALA LUMPUR 1788

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MY

SUBJ: "STRAITS TIMES" REACTION TO MCA POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 1753, 1612

1. FOLLOWING IS GIST OF UNUSUALLY PERCEPTIVE "STRAITS TIMES" EDITORIAL ON FUTURE OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE ASSOCIATION WHICH LARGELY ACCORDS WITH EMBASSY ASSESSMENT PER REFTELS:

2. MCA IS ACTING RATIONALLY IN ACCEPTING NATIONAL FRONT (NF) CONCEPT AND STAYING WITHIN GOVT. UNTIL THERE IS SORTING OUT OF ELECTORAL SEATS TO BE CONTESTED BY PARTIES IN NV, MCA HAS EVERYTHING TO GAIN BY STAYING IN NF, HOLDING "STRONG CARD" OF THREAT OF PULLOUT FROM NF AND GOVT. MCA SHOULD NOT OVERPLAY THIS HAND, AND PARTY SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT EMOTIONS COULD GET OUT OF HAND.

3. REAON ARGUES AGAINST MCA DEPARTURE FROM NF. PARTY CAN ILL AFFORD ANOTHER SPLIT IN CTNKPRANKS. WITHDRAWAL FROM GOVT WOULD BE "WITHDRAWAL FROM POLITICAL SANITY". ALTHOUGH IT PLEDGED TO WORK FOR CHINESE, "HOW CAN MCA DELIVER THE GOODS IF IT NO LONGER RULES AS PART OF WIDE-BASED NATIONAL FRONT?" PARTY CANNOT SURVIVE ON ITS OWN; IF IT CONTESTED AGAINST NF CANDIDATES, IT WOULD SURELY LOSE BECAUSE IN PAST

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MCA HAS DEPENDED ON MALAY AS WELL AS CHINESE VOTES.

4. MCA OUTSIDE THE GOVT WOULD BE FORCED TO SF U"RACIAL GAME" IN OPPOSING CHINESE-BASED NF PARTIES (I.E., GERAKAN AND PEOPLES PROGRESSIVE PARTY) AND THERE IS DANGER OF COMMUNAL "LANGING MATCHMZ MCA "SHOULD KNOW THAT WHILE ITS MODERATION HAS BEEN SOURCE OF WEAKNESS AMONG CERTAIN SEGMENTS OF POPULATION, IT HAS BEEN SOURCE OF STRENGTH AMONG OTHERS." (COMMENT: THIS REFERS TO MCA LACK OF POPULARITY AMONG POORER CHINESE AS OPPOSED TO MIDDLE AND UPPER INCOME CHINESE WHO ARE GENERALLY INCLINED TO COOPERATE IN ALLIANCE CONTEXT.)

5. REGARDING MCA STATEMENT THAT IT IS PRIMARY CHANNEL FOR CHINESE EXPRESSION IN GOVT, MCA MUST REALIZE THAT UMNO IS NOT SOLE CHANNEL OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION FOR MALAYS. "IT NO LONGER FITS IDEALS OF TODAY TO SPEAK ONLY OF MALAY ASPIRATIONS, CHINESE ASPIRATIONS. NATION IS REACHING OUT FOR MALAYSIAN ASPIRATION."
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NNN

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